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Investigating Corruption Charges Against Women Heads of Government

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Much of the scholarship on gender and corruption suggests that women in political office are less corrupt than men. However, in just the past five years, corruption accusations against women heads of government, including Brazil's Dilma Rousseff and South Korea's Park Geun-hye, have made headlines and led to their impeachment. In this article, we examine whether women heads of government are more likely to be charged with corruption and the process by which these charges are levied. Using cross-national data, including recently-available indicators, we first demonstrate that women are significantly more likely to be formally accused of corruption. We then explore the cases of Turkish Prime Minister Tansu Çiller and Brazilian President Dilma Rousseff to show that while women heads of government are taxed for perceived role incongruity, the logic and efficacy of corruption charges is also associated with the belief that women do not belong in the political sphere and are inherently agents of subversion. These findings make a substantial contribution to the literature on gender, leadership, and politics and corruption.

Word Count: 10000

INTRODUCTION

While gender parity in executive office is radically unbalanced cross-nationally, in recent decades, women have assumed more and more leadership roles in politics (Schramm and Stark 2020). These leaders are often viewed as less corrupt than their male counterparts–perceived as eschewing nefarious activities or to be biologically predisposed to be honest, generous, and nurturing. In just the past five years, however, women heads of government, from Brazil's Dilma Rousseff to South Korea's Park Geun-hye, have been formally accused of corruption. Are women heads of government punished for their leadership roles and thus more likely to be charged

This is a manuscript submitted for review.

with corruption than their male counterparts?

The literature on the relationship between gender and corruption has largely focused on how likely women who hold political office are to engage in corruption, and if they are penalized for this behavior (Reyes-Housholder 2020). Studies have found that women in politics tend to either be perceived as less corrupt than their male peers, or are, in fact, measurably less corrupt than men (Breen et al. 2017). Subsequent studies have problematized these findings, with results suggesting that the effects of gender on corruption may be modulated by intervening variables, including social, cultural, and institutional context (Alatas et al. 2009; Goetz 2007; Stensöta et al. 2015). However, less scholarship has interrogated whether corruption charges are levied disproportionately against women (Swamy et al. 2001; Breen et al. 2017). On one hand, pro-women stereotypes could benefit women caught up in corruption scandals, as people would be inclined to question (the extent of) allegations (Murray and Norris 2010; Thomas and Adams 2010). However, a belief in women's exceptional honesty and purity could trigger greater support for the charges (Jones et al. 2021).

We intervene in this debate, arguing that women in leadership positions are more likely to be accused of corruption, due to the inherently socio-political nature of high profile corruption charges. Rather than investigate the relative tendency of women to engage in the abuse of office, we focus on the inextricable link between gender and corruption, and how long-standing narratives make women heads of government inherently more vulnerable to charges. Recent research from Tomashevskiy has demonstrated that anti-bribery prosecutions are inherently political in nature, and often target entities with whom one does not share policy preferences (Tomashevskiy 2021). Similarly, we argue that a limited focus on corruption charges for legal misconduct overlooks critical components of variation, as these allegations must be situated politically and socio-culturally.

In much of the academic research, corruption describes fraudulent, dishonest, or illegal conduct. However, in political processes and popular use, corruption often signifies the changing or debasing of an entity. During the premodern period, for example, corruption was associated with impiety, sexual immorality, and ideas that were considered corrosive to a society (Knights et al. 2018). In recent years, corruption has been associated with a "competition of norms" in political society, and is often identified as impure or deviant behavior (Kroeze et al. 2018; Wickberg 2019). In these conceptualizations,

corruption implies not only specific acts of illegal misconduct, but the violation or subversion of spaces and norms.

We argue that, while paradoxically women have been normatively associated with generosity and honesty, women's political leadership is vulnerable to the exploitation of longstanding narratives of women as a subversive force. The mechanism connecting women in office with corruption charges is embedded in the definition of corruption itself—by virtue of a woman's presence in high office, she will be perceived by some as inherently guilty. Politics is perceived to be a "male-dominated space" (Bos et al. 2021), where women are trespassing. This reinforces opposition and lends credence to charges of malfeasance by forming, "cognitive and affective glue between accusations" (Sosa 2019, 724).

We make two important contributions to the existing literature on gender and corruption. First, we intervene in the debate on the relationship between gender and corruption to demonstrate that women political leaders are significantly more likely to be charged with corruption. Using a cross-national dataset of heads of government, we first demonstrate that women are significantly more likely to be formally accused of corruption than their male counterparts. This cross-national data allows us to add to the current literature, which primarily relies on survey experiments done in high income Western countries. While survey experiments have the advantage of efficiently dealing with causal inference concerns, they nonetheless do not always capture the fact that people may need to be primed for gendered considerations. Even when priming questions are present, these are arguably not as strong as real-life political contexts, where people more easily attach stereotypes to real candidates. Furthermore, as recent research suggests, for various reasons (institutional, but also cultural), the findings from high-income Western countries might not hold in other contexts. By focusing on actual political processes, in a variety of contexts, we can more directly examine the socio-political role of gender linking women heads of government with corruption.

Secondly, we introduce a new theory to explain this trend, focusing on the socio-political process by which accusations of corruption are levied. We explore the cases of Turkish Prime Minister Tansu Çiller and Brazilian President Dilma Rousseff to investigate the process by which these leaders were charged with corruption. We find evidence that the logic and efficacy of corruption charges against women heads of government is associated with an understanding of women as not belonging in the

political sphere, and as agents of corruption.

In the next section, we briefly review the existing literature on gender and corruption. In section two, we demonstrate through statistical analysis that women heads of government are significantly more likely to be officially accused of corruption than their male counterparts. In the third section we explore the validity of our proposed causal mechanism—how these women were perceived as not belonging and therefore corrupting the political sphere—through case studies of corruption charges against Çiller and Rousseff. We conclude with a discussion of our findings and avenues for future research.

EXPLORING NARRATIVES: GENDER AND CORRUPTION

The question of whether women who are elected to public office behave differently than their male counterparts has received considerable attention from scholars in recent years. Several studies have found that women are measurably less corrupt than men (Breen et al. 2017). Cross-national studies of gender representation in parliaments provide evidence that more representation of women in parliament is correlated with lower levels of corruption (Dollar et al. 2001; Esarey and Schwindt-Bayer 2019; Jha and Sarangi 2018; Swamy et al. 2001). Experimental laboratory evidence also suggests that women are less likely to engage in corrupt behavior than men (Isaac and Norton 2012; Rivas 2013).

A number of subsequent studies have problematized this finding, with results suggesting that the effects of gender on corruption may be modulated by intervening variables, including social, cultural, and institutional context (Alatas et al. 2009; Goetz 2007; Stensöta et al. 2015). Sung finds that the observed correlation between gender and corruption outcomes is caused by a causally prior variable, liberal democracy: that is, liberal democratic institutions promote both gender equality and higher-quality governance (Sung 2003). According to Esarey and Chirillo, there is a stronger relationship between gender and corruption in democracies, indicating that in some institutional contexts, women experience "greater pressure to conform to existing political norms about corruption" (Esarey and Chirillo 2013, 362). Schwindt-Bayer finds that a greater presence of women in Latin American governments may reduce corruption, but only in combination with improvements to democratic institutions, such as electoral accountability (Schwindt-Bayer 2016). Conversely, Branisa and Ziegler show that regardless of political institutions, societies where women's social participation is devalued

still have higher levels of corruption (Branisa and Ziegler 2010). These findings are supported by political science research indicating that democratic institutions make corrupt behavior riskier for all leaders regardless of gender (De Mesquita et al. 2005; Kolstad and Wiig 2011; Kunicova and Rose-Ackerman 2005; Kunicova 2006).

Nevertheless, research also shows that all else equal, people tend to view women politicians as less corrupt than their male peers (Barnes and Beaulieu 2014; Treisman 2007). Studies in the development economics literature even suggest that women's lower propensity to engage in corrupt behavior is "a myth" that is supported in part by women leaders' efforts to "deflect the mistrust and criticism with which the public regard them because of their gender with reassurances that their interest in politics is as mothers, as guardians, as carers of the nation"(Goetz 2007, 90). Surveys suggest that women tend to be less tolerant of corruption than men (Bowman and Gilligan 2008; Torgler and Valev 2010). Survey evidence also suggests that voters may perceive women as marginalized within political institutions, or more risk averse, and thus less likely to engage in corruption (Barnes and Beaulieu 2019). An experimental survey finds that the mere presence of a female candidate systematically reduced the probability of voters expressing suspicion of election fraud (Barnes and Beaulieu 2014). At the same time, the institutional context in which women elected officials operate is also an important moderator of perceptions about corruption: experimental research by Barnes et al. has found that characterizations of women as political outsiders and as more risk-averse enhance perceptions that women in political office will reduce corruption (Barnes et al. 2018); on the other hand, Schneider and Bos show that stereotypes about women do not fully apply to women politicians in voters' minds (Schneider and Bos 2014).

Given these mixed findings, it bears asking, are women politicians disproportionately charged with corruption in comparison with their male peers? On the one hand, pro-women stereotypes, as exemplified above, could benefit women caught up in corruption scandals, as people would be inclined to question (the extent of) allegations (Murray and Norris 2010; Thomas and Adams 2010). Literature shows that women are far less likely to be involved in violent crime than men, and across all types of criminal cases, women are more likely to receive leniency in sentencing than men (Doerner and Demuth 2010; Nagel and Hagan 1983).

On the other hand, the belief in women's higher honesty and purity could lead to enhanced punishment for perceived transgressions. Expectancy violation theory suggests that individuals are punished for contravening stereotypes associated with their group (Eagly and Karau 2002; Rudman 1998). Indeed, existing political science research provides further evidence that this may be the case, suggesting that due to stereotypes about women's lower association with corruption, women who are perceived to have engaged in corrupt practices may be punished for seeming to defy this stereotype. A survey experiment in the United States, for example, found that voters' support for women candidates involved in an economic scandal dropped much further than for similar men candidates (Courtemanche and Connor Green 2020). Likewise, another survey found that even with respect to sex scandals, for which conventional wisdom would suggest that politicians rarely get punished, women are treated harsher than men (Barnes et al. 2020). Furthermore, presidential approval models spanning 18 Latin American countries show a negative impact of being a woman politician in the context of scandals and executive corruption (Reyes-Housholder 2020). Survey experiments in Mexico and Brazil, however, found that this gender-related backlash holds only in some contexts: in this case, specifically in Mexico, but not Brazil (Pereira 2020). And a survey experiment of voters in the United Kingdom found that women politicians do not face significantly greater punishment for corrupt behavior than their male counterparts, but that women voters were more likely to punish women politicians for their perceived misconduct than men (Eggers et al. 2018).

At the same time, studies also suggest that women politicians tend to be judged more harshly or held to higher standards than their male counterparts in other areas. There is significant evidence that women candidates are held to higher standards than their male counterparts in elections (Fulton 2012). Bauer finds that women candidates in the United States need to be seen as more qualified than men to win voter support (Bauer 2020). These findings suggest that women politicians could therefore also be judged more harshly for corrupt behavior, and charged or punished accordingly.

Charging Women Leaders

The existing literature does not provide a clear indication of whether women heads of government are more or less likely to be charged with corruption. The focus of much of this work is on legal

malfeasance rather than the political process by which charges are levied. We contend that perceptions of women as an inherently subversive force substantially increase the likelihood that women heads of government will be charged with corruption. Rather than compete with existing theories regarding role expectancy violation, which suggests that individuals are punished for contravening stereotypes associated with their group (Eagly and Karau 2002; Rudman 1998), our theory compliments existing research offering an additional mechanism to explain the increased frequency at which women heads of government are charged with corruption.

As many scholars have noted there are substantial questions of conceptual clarity in the study of corruption. Although the term "corruption" is often used in scholarship to narrowly describe particular illegal acts in public office (often of a financial nature), this is not how this term is primarily used in popular and political discourse (Kroeze et al. 2018). As Sofia Wickberg shows, the term "'corruption' comes from the Latin corruption/corrumpere – destroy or ruin," and the Oxford English Dictionary includes definitions such as "the destruction or spoiling of anything, especially by disintegration or by decomposition with its attendant unwholesomeness", as well as "the perversion of anything from an original state of purity" (Wickberg 2019, 141). This definition of corruption is common in popular use—for example when people describe the "corruption of the youth" or the "corruption of innocence." And while we do not intend to engage in an etymological debate, this origin and connotation can be found across many latin speaking countries. As opposed to technocratic and objective, conceptually, corruption is socio-political, both in terms of what constitutes corruption and how it is perceived/investigated. While scholars tend to focus on the legal-rational definition of corruption, this second definition is inextricably linked to women heads of government's vulnerability to corruption charges. Women are more vulnerable to this rhetoric because they are imagined as corrupting the political space, and are subject to salient socio-cultural narratives of women as temptresses and subversives.

The political sphere has often been defined in feminine terms, in relation to the men that are seen to control politics (Sjoberg 2009, 44).[1] As Wilcox explains, "the "imagined community" of the nation depends upon the homosocial relations of men to protect the nation-as-women's-body against foreign

[1]See also (Landes 2003)

incursion" (Sjoberg 2009, 37). Feminist theorists (Feder 2017; Okin 2013), for example, have long interrogated the division between the public (the political) and the private (the familial), noting that the public sphere and political spheres are contrasted with the feminine. As Wright explains, ". . . The public sphere was marked originally as an exclusively male preserve and the private sphere of the home as that to which women were relegated" (Sjoberg 2009, 193).

This distinction creates a substantial barrier to women's entry and taxes women who occupy political office.[2] In the US, for example, Horn Sheeler and Vasby Anderson explain that "popular frames applied to women running for the presidency since 19th century [erode women's] credibility by accentuating the oddity of a woman as president" (Sheeler and Anderson 2013, 242). In this context, women in political leadership are not seen simply as out of place, but as soiling the sanctity of political life. We can see this in Sarah's Lewis's popular 1839 book, Woman's Mission, where she elucidates this point: "Women would risk succumbing to selfishness if they were to enter the public sphere of the state. With their nature ruined, they would thus cease to be the 'potent agent for the amelioration of mankind," leading to the degeneration of civilization (Lewis 1839, 48-49).[3] Williams describes a similar phenomenon in analyzing the ascension of Australian Prime Minister Julia Gillard: "Women politicians are almost always seen as deviant due to being women in highly traditional masculine spaces" (Williams 2017, 552). This response aligns with existing research in psychology—for example, Dahl, Vescio, and Weaver found through an experimental study that men perceive their masculinity as threatened when they are outperformed by women in masculine domains (such as the political sphere) and are thus more likely to respond with anger and the sexualization of the woman (Dahl et al. 2015). As described, the political sphere is highly masculinized and a woman holding the most senior political position in a country could easily be perceived as outperforming their male colleagues. Similarly, in an analysis of editorial cartoons depicting Malawi's first female President Joyce Banda, Chikaipa found that the commentary indicated "a president should be ideally viewed in terms of a father who will fend for and stand for the country," and that President Banda was often thought of as an unsuccessful leader because of her 'woman characteristics' (Chikaipa 2019, 21). In analyzing the UK's second 2014 general election leadership, Harmer, Savigny, and Ward found "Female success is presented in terms

[2]See also Hooper 2001, 91

[3]As quoted in Towns 2009

of the capacity to emasculate male rivals; male success is presented as a consequence of displays of strength, aggression, and masculinity" (Harmer et al. 2017, 937). Women in office are perceived as inherently guilty of subverting the integrity of the office, and charges of corruption connote this. As Sosa explains, ". . . corruption is not only a judgement about ethics, but a judgement about belonging" (Sosa 2019, 735).

This sense that women do not belong in the political realm, and are by their very presence debasing the office, is reinforced by longstanding cross socio-cultural narratives of women as corrupting forces. From Eve and Jezebel to Lady Macbeth, Cersei Lanister, and Marquise de Merteuil, the trope of the powerful, subversive fatale woman (femme fatal) seducing and corrupting men pervades movies, literature, and religious discourses. This lens has been applied to coverage comparing Hillary Clinton and Argentina's Fernández de Kirchner to Lady Macbeth. And in China, Fang illustrates through digital ethnography, discourse analysis, and interviews, ". . . That a cultural script derived from the Chinese storytelling tradition of "women are a source of trouble" serves as a contemporary narrative of corruption"(Chen 2017, 67). We can see this in the literature on the Friekorps in Germany, as Hooper describes, "In their novels and memoirs, the male body was depicted as dry, clean, hard, erect, and intact, but always threatened by contamination from feminine dirt, slime and mire. Women's bodies were seen as messy, open, wild, and promiscuous—as engulfing swamps in which men could be annihilated. Women, communists, and the rebellious working class represented a 'flood' or 'tide' threatening to break down both masculine integrity and established social barriers" (Hooper 2001, 83).

How can we reconcile the trope of the subversive femme fatale with normative expectations that women will be more honest, and less corrupt? These are the not competing narratives, but rather two sides of the same coin. Like many other binary or trichotomous narratives regarding women (Sjoberg and Gentry 2007), women are perceived as either self-sacrificing and beyond reproach, or subversive and sexually deviant (Hametner et al. 2021). While research on women and corruption has largely focused on the positive stereotype, in this paper we examine the effects of the negative narrative to explain the trend above.

These narratives are deeply embedded in socio-cultural discourse and can easily be activated or spurred (by a poor economy, for example). Because of this, when these charges are levied against

women heads of government, they are given credence by these pre-existing narratives and imagined as intrinsically true. The narratives themselves, and the ways in which they appear and are understood, can of course be distinct across cultures, as gender is ultimately an intersubjective social construct. While striving to not essentialize all women across the globe as behaving in particular ways, we nevertheless endeavor to demonstrate how pervasive and similar some of these narratives are across cultures.

In the next sections, we use cross-national data on heads of government, as well as two case studies, to demonstrate that women heads of government are more likely to be charged with corruption than their male counterparts. We therefore test two hypotheses associated with the above theory:

- *H1: Women heads of government are more likely to be formally charged with corruption.*
- *H2: Perceptions of women as subversive forces, that do not belong in the political sphere, increase the likelihood they will be charged with corruption.*

EMPIRICS

Statistical Analyses

We conduct an initial analysis using the Archigos data set on leaders (Goemans et al. 2009). The data set includes information on individual heads of state, such as the manner in which rulers enter and leave political power, the post-tenure fate of the ruler, and other personal information. As Archigos only codes imprisonment of leaders, we created a new variable coding cases where charges for corruption have been brought against the leader (regardless of whether the leader was subsequently imprisoned), either during the leader's tenure, or up to five years afterward their tenure ends (as the process of bringing charges often extends to after a leader's tenure ends). To do so, we searched the Archigos codebook using the 'corrupt*' search term.[4] Leaders who were accused of corruption by foreign governments, by the public, or by political rivals were not coded as charged. We were solely interested in allegations brought by domestic judicial or legislative institutions, in order to capture formal charges of corruption. Out of 2119 leader observations, we have 14 cases of women leaders accused of corruption (out of

[4]For those leaders whose terms had not yet ended by 31 December 2015, we conducted independent research to code whether corruption charges were later brought against a head of government.

a total of 68 women leader observations), and 37 cases of men leaders accused of the same crime (out of a total of 2051 men leader observations). Given that we base our coding of corruption on an existing dataset with limited information about each leader, it is possible that we are undercounting cases of corruption charges. Measurement bias is, however, likely not systematic; in other words, there should not be any specific gender-related bias in how cases of corruption are counted. Even if there is an underlying bias in the corruption coding, it would have to be quite large to explain the following findings.

Descriptive statistics show a clear difference between the rate of women leaders and the rate of men leaders who were charged with corruption. Eighteen percent of women leaders were accused of corruption compared to only 2 percent of men leaders (see Figure 1). There is also a small difference between the rate at which women leaders were imprisoned compared to men, conditional on corruption charges, (see Figure 2). To further probe these differences, we use our new measure of charges of corruption as our dependent variable, and gender of leaders as our main independent variable, in a logit model spanning the 1945-2015 period with various control variables, standard errors clustered at the country level, and specifications for country and year fixed effects.

As mentioned, our main models contain a battery of standard control variables, including Polity's index of regime type (Marshall and Jaggers Marshall and Jaggers), GDP growth (Bolt Bolt), and from the V-Dem project (Coppedge et al. 2015), judicial constraints on the executive, executive corruption and media bias. All of these could impact readiness to accuse and imprison corrupt leaders overall. We control for regime type using a country's Polity score when the leader left office, as this could impact the readiness to accuse leaders of corruption, as well as the degree and manner in which leaders are subsequently prosecuted. According to a large literature, GDP growth can serve as a rough proxy for a leader's approval ratings, which could also impact corruption charges (Fauvelle-Aymar and Stegmaier 2013). We also control for judicial constraints on the executive through the V-Dem index on the extent to which the executive respects the constitution and complies with court rulings and executive corruption by means of the V-Dem index on executive bribery and corrupt exchanges. More corrupt and less judicially independent countries could exhibit more cases of alleged corruption and imprisonment as the systemic nature of corruption incentivizes misbehaviour. At very high levels of

FIGURE 1. Corruption allegations

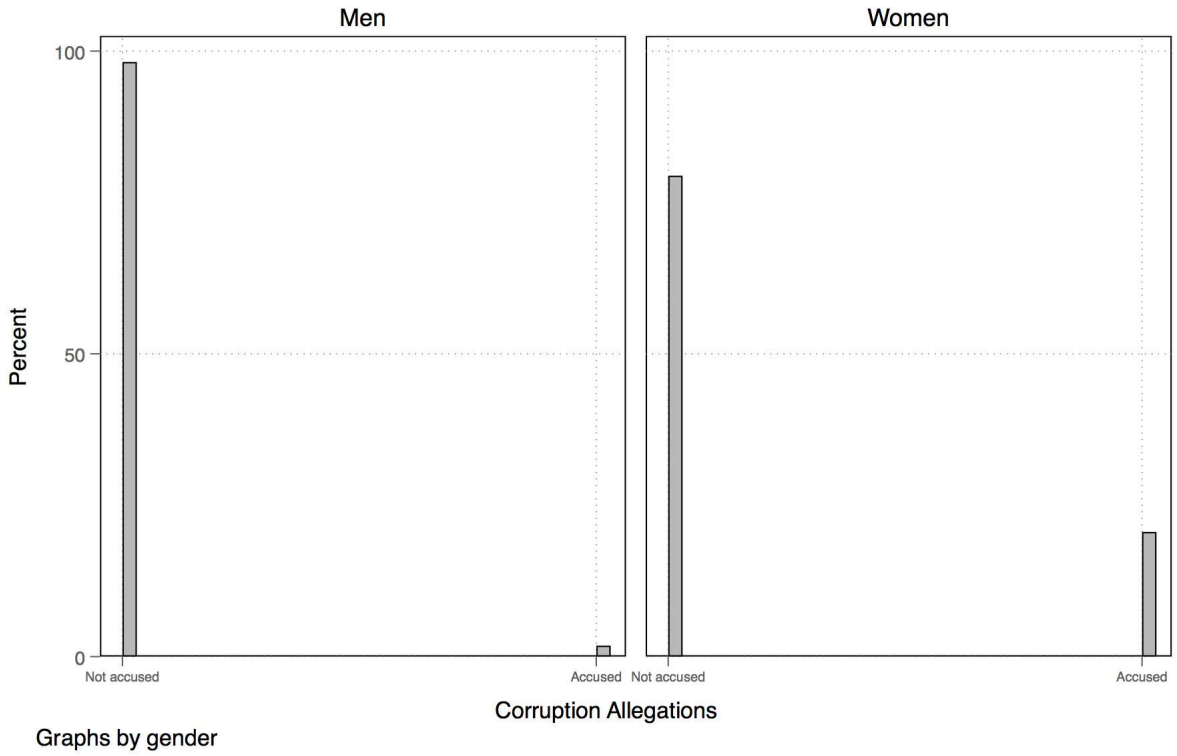
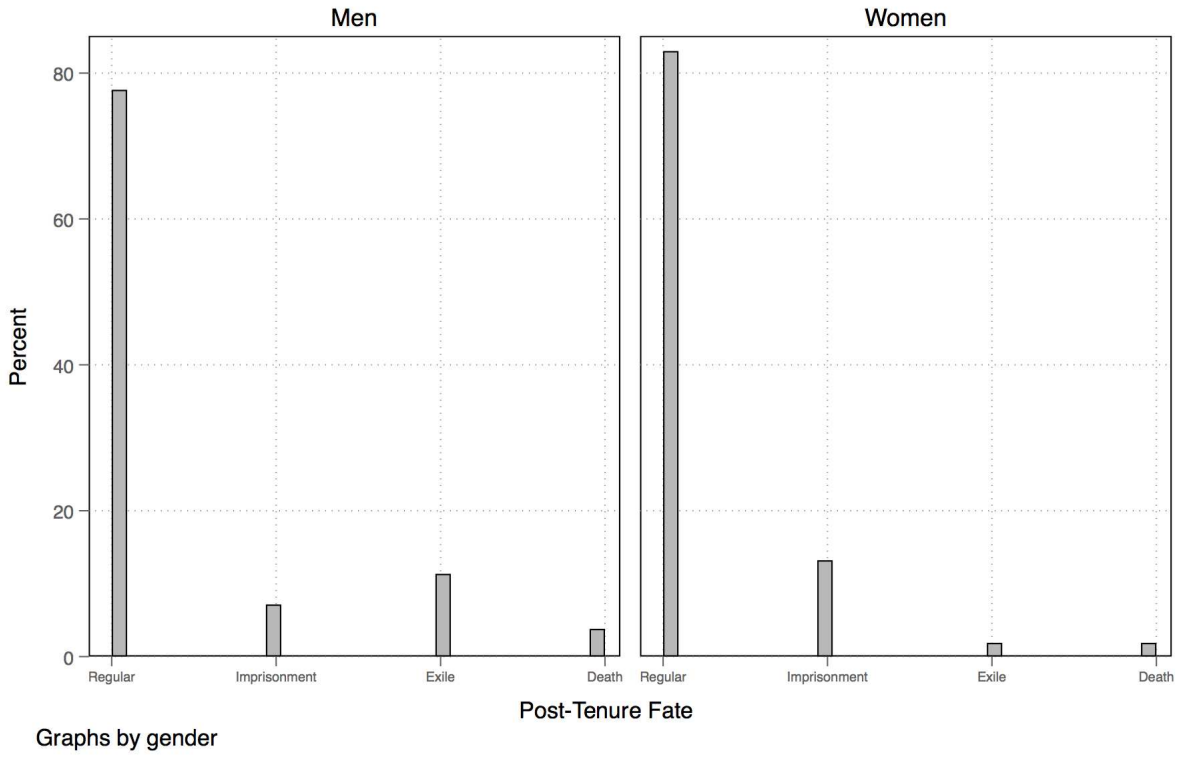


FIGURE 2. Post-tenure fate



public corruption we could nevertheless see a reverse effect, as leaders here would have the means to stop such allegations from becoming official. Media bias, measured as media bias against opposition parties or candidates, also from the V-Dem project, could also positively impact corruption allegations and imprisonment as it is often times through independent journalism that such cases come to light in the first place.

Beyond these overall systemic level variables influencing corruption, we add controls that proxy the networks and resources leaders have at hand to influence potential corruption charges and sentencing. We include a control for women's political participation in the country, understood to include women's descriptive representation in the legislature and an equal share in the overall distribution of power, from V-Dem. From the Archigos data set, we include several individual level leader variables, such as months in office, family ties to other leaders, and entry into power (whether regular, irregular or by foreign imposition). More descriptive statistics on all our variables can be found in the Appendix.

In Table 1, results show that, controlling for these country and leader specific characteristics, women leaders are much more likely than men leaders to be accused of corruption. Holding covariates at their means in Model 1, we find that the relative probability of being accused of corruption for women is 110 percentage points higher than for men. Model 2 and 3 show that the statistical significance of this effect holds when using country and year fixed effects. In the appendix we also show a variety of other model specifications, in which we variously include alternative control variables such as leaders' political orientation or their approval ratings (Table A2), test alternative measures for institutional context (Tables A3 and A4), probe for the effect of including interaction terms with level of women's empowerment (Table A5), and use multinomial simultaneous equation models to ascertain the effect of gender on leader post-tenure fate, controlling for corruption allegations (Table A6). In all models, the size and statistical significance of the effect remain similar.

It is worth noting here that there may be a selection effect with respect to our findings: women who attain the highest office could be systematically more or less corrupt in practice than men. However, because corruption is necessarily covert behavior that is not always discovered, it is very difficult (if not impossible) to measure and compare the empirical "level" of corruption that leaders engage in. Additionally, there is substantial evidence that women in office do engage in less corruption than men.

TABLE 1. Corruption allegation models

	Dependent variable: Corruption allegation		
	(1)	(2)	(3)
Woman	2.458***	3.225***	4.083**
	(0.384)	(0.790)	(1.382)
Polity	-0.037	-0.111	-0.227
	(0.043)	(0.069)	(0.121)
GDP growth	-0.531	-1.701	-1.776
	(0.758)	(1.420)	(1.554)
Judicial constraints on executive	0.259	-0.788	-2.234
	(0.533)	(0.859)	(1.436)
Executive bribery and corrupt exchanges	-0.609***	-0.242	0.172
	(0.130)	(0.324)	(0.581)
Media bias	0.380	0.717*	0.368
	(0.219)	(0.360)	(0.433)
Women's political participation	1.353	3.012**	1.475
	(0.755)	(0.963)	(2.377)
Months in office	0.003*	0.007*	0.009
	(0.002)	(0.003)	(0.007)
Ties to other leaders	0.600	0.342	0.421
	(0.328)	(0.784)	(0.892)
Entry into power	1.698*	2.372	4.495
	(0.765)	(1.352)	(3.093)
Country fixed effects		✓	✓
Time fixed effects			✓
Constant	-7.355***	-9.044***	-7.969
	(0.967)	(1.884)	(4.729)
Observations	1864	636	294
Pseudo R2	0.184	0.270	0.322
Chi2	96.31	.	.
p	2.98e-16	.	.

Standard errors in parentheses

* $p < 0.05$, ** $p < 0.01$, *** $p < 0.001$

Nevertheless, adjudicating whether women heads of government are actually more corrupt and are therefore appropriately more likely to be punished for it, or are more likely to be accused and punished for corruption because of their gender, is necessary if we are to believe the results above. To do so, and further explore the causal mechanism explaining our findings, we turn to the case study of Turkish Prime Minister Tansu Çiller.

While our statistical analysis demonstrates that women heads of government are significantly more likely to face investigation for corruption than men, we now turn to an investigation of the causal mechanisms that produce this trend.

Case Studies

In the following two case studies, we explore the causal mechanism identified in our second hypothesis. By pairing our statistical analysis with qualitative case studies, we are using nested analysis, a mixed-methods research strategy. As Lieberman notes, nested analysis is a useful strategy to "assess the plausibility of observed statistical relationships between variables... This integrated strategy improves the prospects of making valid causal inferences in cross-national and other forms of comparative research by drawing on the distinct strengths of two important approaches" (Lieberman 2005; **?**). The below case studies constitute what George and Bennett call a "heuristic case study," one that inductively identifies new causal mechanisms (George et al. 2005, 75). Drawing on primary and secondary sources, the cases use process tracing in order to "identify the intervening causal process – the causal chain and causal mechanism – between an independent variable (or variables) and the outcome of the dependent variable" (George et al. 2005, 206).

The cases vary in both time (1993 to 1996, and 2011 to 2016) and space, and variation in institutional context. While Brazil is a presidential democracy with lower levels of executive constraints (6 Polity Score), Turkey is a parliamentary democracy characterized by more executive constraints (7 Polity Score).[5]. Most importantly, the cases show variation in women's representation in political office and women's political participation writ large. When Ciller was in office, women accounted for only 2.4 percent of the MPs in the legislature. Alternatively, at the beginning of Rouseff's second term, women

[5]All democracies have an executive constraint score between 5 and 7 (Marshall Marshall)

accounted for 9 percent of the lower house compared to 13.6 in the upper house (Union 2020). More generally, levels of women's political empowerment were substantially higher (.83) in Brazil in 2015, than in Turkey in 1993 (.54) (Coppedge et al. 2015).

In examining evidence of the mechanisms we propose, we find substantial evidence that perceptions of women as subversive forces, that do not belong in the political sphere, increased the likelihood of their vulnerability to the charges.

Prime Minister Tansu Çiller

Tansu Çiller, Turkey's first (and so far, only) female prime minister, served as Turkey's prime minister from 1993 to 1996, and as both Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs between 1996 and 1997, facing several allegations of corruption during and after her time in office. In 1996, the Turkish parliament opted to set up a special commission to probe corruption charges against her claiming that she had improperly tampered with the privatization of two companies, but in February 1997, parliament voted against sending the investigation to the Supreme Court (noa b; Couturier Couturier). In June 2000, she was again cleared by Parliament, this time for charges that she had siphoned money from a covert intelligence fund that she used to finance her party (noa a).

Çiller may indeed have engaged in corrupt acts during her time in office, as many of her male peers did. However, the ubiquitously high level of corruption in Turkish politics across parties and individuals in this period does not explain variation in whether leaders are not just accused of, but also formally investigated for, corruption. This case demonstrates that corruption charges were at least in part the result of perceptions of Ciller's gender, and that she was seen as guilty of corruption by virtue of holding the office, augmented by charges that she had abandoned the promises she made to Turkish women to serve as a bulwark against Islamist political forces when she agreed to join a coalition government with the Refah Party, a decision seen as both selfish and cynical.

Çiller's gender crystallized the idea that she had betrayed her party and voters and engaged in cynical political manipulations to stay in office, thereby corrupting the office of prime minister as well as the office of leader of the True Path Party. At first, her personal image as a professional, highly educated woman who dressed in smart western clothes bolstered her and her party's platform as a

modernizing, secular, and western-oriented. Yet when Ciller agreed to form a coalition with the Islamist Refah Party, political elites and the media began to paint her as avaricious, grasping, and greedy for power. Notably, men who engaged in similar political maneuvers were seen positively as deft politicians rather than as degrading their office by engaging in this kind of political maneuvering. The sudden shift in Ciller's gendered image, from fresh-faced, secular modernizer to avaricious and grasping, and her failure to live up to the 'pure' image of a woman in political office, became key reasons that political elites lost confidence in her. This loss of confidence led directly to multiple parliamentary votes on whether to send corruption charges against Ciller to Turkey's Supreme Court.

Çiller's image as a professional, highly-educated, young woman who had studied and earned a graduate degree in the United States was closely linked to her political views as a secularist and a modernizer (Bennett 2010; Kesgin 2012; Inal 2017). In keeping with this image, Çiller campaigned vigorously against the Islamist opposition party Refah in the 1995 elections, contrasting their positions with her secular politics. Çiller targeted women as a constituency in her 1995 campaign, using secularism as a tool to do so. She pledged to defend Turkey's secularism and called Refah "murderous merchants of religion" (Skard 2015, 395). Her campaign argued that only Çiller was courageous enough to oppose Erbakan, the leader of Refah, and that a vote for her center-right opponent was actually a vote for Islamists. Another newspaper ad declared, "mothers, sisters, brides, girls, fiancees... I warn all of you. The Welfare Party cadres of Yilmaz are against the rights Turkish women have gained. Don't forget that the votes you give to Yilmaz will help the Welfare Party cadres" (Bardach 1997, 16).

The True Path Party won the second largest share of seats in Parliament in the December 1995 elections. In March 1996, Çiller and Mesut Yılmaz, head of the center-right Motherland Party, formed a coalition government with Yilmaz as prime minister, but this government proved short-lived. As opposition leader, Erbakan announced his intention to call for a parliamentary investigation into Çiller's role in the privatization of Tofas and Tedas. Although he was her coalition partner, Yilmaz – who had also called for an investigation into Çiller's role in the Tofas and Tedas privatizations during the campaign, voted in favor of the investigations (Meyer 1997).

In a move that was shocking to many, Çiller then formed a coalition with Refah in June 1996. Erbakan served as Prime Minister, while Çiller became Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign

Affairs. Çiller's agreement appeared to be a means of avoiding corruption charges in Parliament, as Erbakan apparently agreed to drop the charges in exchange for her support. Reportedly, other politicians in Turkey "accuse[d] her of forging the alliance to shield herself from a series of inquiries into her personal finances" (Kinzer Kinzer). The coalition government quickly drew opposition from secularist forces in Turkey, including the powerful military. In June 1997, the military forced the government out of power in a soft coup (Cinar et al. 2002; Bennett 2010).

Çiller's decision to form a coalition government with Refah fatally undermined her credibility across politics and Turkish society. The New York Times noted that "some Turks view Ms. Çiller, who has denied all wrong doing, as cynical and mendacious" (Kinzer Kinzer). Çiller was described in a 1997 New Republic article in harsher terms, as "the singularly ambitious, pathologically duplicitous former prime minister whose craven deal-making with the fundamentalists precipitated the whole crises in the first place" (Bardach 1997, 16-17). A prominent Turkish journalist, Mehmet Ali Birand, said of Çiller that "she will make a deal with anyone, anyone who will keep her in power" (Bardach 1997, 18). Her decision, in other words, was seen as a betrayal of her gender and a corruption of the office itself.

Çiller's decision undermined her gendered image as a secular modernist, and her willingness to do so created an equally gendered backlash where she was painted as mendacious and greedy for power for doing so, leading many former supporters to desert her. By June 1997, 35 members of her party in parliament had left the party (noa e). Çiller even lost the support of her former mentor President Demirel. Reports claimed that "many former allies of Mrs. Çiller say they are furious at her " (noa c). Analysts ascribed her downfall to a "hunger for power at any cost, resulting in too many compromises," and a willingness to shift "policies and discourse as the situation warranted" (Bennett 2010, 132).

Allegations of corruption quickly became a wedge that political elites, including the opposition as well as former supporters, used to push Çiller out of power after her political star fell. Media reports increasingly focused on Çiller's "'wealth, family, character, leadership style,' and political dealings" (Bennett 2010, 130-131). A Turkish Daily News editorial claimed "there have been widespread allegations that Çiller and people associated with her have been using their offices to gain undue advantage" (noa d).

The corruption allegations against Çiller were undoubtedly both numerous and serious –indeed,

many believed at the time that they could lead not just to her fall from grace, but to imprisonment or exile (Kolstad and Wiig 2011). But her behavior was not publicly noticeably different from the male politicians who surrounded her. As Arat notes, "she acted like the male leaders before her in a number of ways. Neither her priorities nor accusations of corruption surrounding her were novel to Turkish politics" (Arat 1998, 18). An expert on Turkish politics commented at the time that "Turkey has proved reluctant to deal with corruption. It's significant that the National Assembly is handling alleged corruption in such a way" (YACKLEY YACKLEY). And although Çiller had been accused of corruption during her time in office, she had faced little pushback within her party around earlier corruption allegations. Rather, her "unforgivable sin was the coalition agreement with Refah" (Meyer 1997).

Of course, it is impossible to test the counter-factual, and it is likely that a male politician in Çiller's position would have also lost some support for the same political move. Yet in Çiller's case, many analysts of Turkish politics have noted that gender played an important role in how she was perceived after she came into office, in stark contrast with many of her male peers. While Çiller's political mentor Demirel was depicted as a deft political actor with a "moderating and conciliatory style," Çiller was described as having a "lust for command" (Bennett 2010, 131). According to Inal,

> Her use of her gender, which helped her in the beginning of her career, ultimately turned against her... Her unethical leadership especially her lack of integrity became the catalyst establishing her sameness with the previous leadership experiences of the Turkish political scene but also gave the people a sense of being cheated because it came from a woman (Inal 2017, 19).

Next, we turn to a second case study of President Dilma Rouseff of Brazil.

President Dilma Rousseff

We next examine how perceptions of gender affected the process by which Brazilian President Dilma Rousseff was charged with corruption. We find that perceptions of Rousseff's gender augmented the plausibility of the charges, and substantially increased the efficacy of the campaign against her.

Building from the work of Sosa (Sosa 2019) and Encarnación (Encarnación 2017), we investigate how corruption was used as a catchall by Rouseff's opposition, and how she was seen as guilty by virtue of holding the office of the presidency.

Dilma Rousseff was elected to her first term in 2010, following a successful career in the federal government. She grew up in a middle-class family in Belo Horizonte, lacking dynastic or other political ties in her youth. In her twenties, Rousseff joined the National Liberation Command, a Marxist guerilla organization committed to overthrowing the military dictatorship. At 22, she was arrested for stealing a safe belonging to the governor of São Paulo and brutally tortured in prison. Her imprisonment and role in the National Liberation Command would be brought up time and again during her presidency as evidence of her subversion.

Rousseff was released from prison in 1972, and in 1977 earned a degree in economics from the Rio Grande do Sul Federal University. She went on to serve at City of Porto Alegre's secretary of treasury, and later Rio Grande do Sul secretary of energy before joining the Lula da Silva administration in 2003. Brazil's government is dominated by men at all levels, and has the lowest levels of women in the legislature in Latin America (Union 2020). Despite this, Rousseff earned a reputation as an effective, no-nonsense bureaucrat. In 2005, she became President Lula da Silva's chief of staff and was handpicked to be his successor at the end of his second term.[6]

Socio-politically, the office of the presidency in Brazil is deeply gendered. As Sosa explains, "Brazilian populist leaders such as Getulio Vargas in the 1930s and Lula da Silva in the 2000s often positioned their charismatic leadership in terms of father figures, not only in order to establish a relationship with the people, but also to position their political family" (Sosa 2019, 18).[7] Despite her sterling record, many viewed Rousseff as "'Lula's puppet' (Encarnación 2017, 85) or 'Lula in a skirt' (Sosa 2019, 718), or 'the woman Lula gave to Brazil'(Franceschet et al. 2016, 12). Both opponents and supporters cast Rousseff as a placeholder, expecting largely a continuation of Lula da Silva's policies. Before her election campaign, Rousseff worked with consultants on her public image, but her candidacy challenged antiquated conceptions of women's roles. Rousseff was a former Marxist

[6]Both Rousseff and Lula da Silva are a part of the Worker's Party (PT).

[7]During her campaign and presidency, Rousseff would try to situate herself as the mother of Brazil (Franceschet et al. 2016)

guerrilla, divorced, and as Omar Encarnación describes,

> Brazilians thought her age (68 at the time of her impeachment) , short hair, and professional attire were an affront to conventional standards of femininity, which emphasize youth, flowing locals, and voluptuous features. For the media, Rousseff's status as an unmarried divorce supported the view that she was aggressive and lacked sex appeal. Like many other female politicians, Rousseff has also been criticized for being too serious, being too much of a wonk, and lacking charisma (Encarnación 2017, 89).

Later, in her second term as president, Rousseff's image would be juxtaposed with vice president Temer's wife who was described as "'beautiful, maiden-like, and a housewife'" (Argolo Argolo).

In 2010, Rousseff was elected to the presidency with 56 percent of the vote. She maintained strong public support throughout most of her first term, however, by 2013, the aftershocks of the 2009 Global Financial Crisis produced a recession in Brazil and Rousseff's popularity ebbed from over 60 percent of respondents believing she was doing a "good/excellent job" in May 2013 to less than 30 percent responding so by July (Jalalzai 2015, 208). During her campaign for re-election in 2014, Rousseff received a disproportionate amount of negative coverage compared to male candidates and the Brazilian Democratic Party indicated that they would not accept the election results (Feres Junior and Sassara 2018).

Ultimately, Rousseff was re-elected to her second term in 2014 by the narrowest margin since the country democratized in 1986. While most newly elected leaders experience a bit of a honeymoon period, the disproportionately negative coverage of Rousseff continued after the election, only increasing until her ousting (Feres Junior and Sassara 2018). Following a speech on International Women's Day on March 8, 2015, popular protests against the leader took hold. In addition to the poor economic climate, public anger was compounded by the construction of expensive sports facilities for the 2014 world cup and 2016 Olympics.

Shortly following the devastating Zika outbreak in April, the Tribunal de Contas da União (TCU) announced their decision to delay approval of the 2014 budget. The TCU requested Rousseff explain allegedly masking the size of the budget deficit. Rousseff was charged with delaying payments to the Central Bank during her re-election campaign in 2014. However, this was a common practice, and one

used by her predecessors (Sosa 2019, 717). That October, the TCU rejected the government accounts. The opposition sent another impeachment request (which has previously been unsuccessful), which was accepted by lower house speaker Eduardo Cunha in December 2015. Some claimed Cunha was angry at the president for not protecting him against an investigation in the House Ethics Committee—later that August he would be charged with taking a five-million-dollar bribe related to Petrobras (Marcello Marcello). Members of the President's coalition, soon turned against the president, while aides of Rousseff suggested ". . . The impeachment charges were retribution for her refusing to preemptively pardon key members of Congress from charges linked to the investigation" (Sosa 2019, 736).[8] In fact, on a leaked recording, Senator Juca described the logic of the impeachment as "to 'staunch the bleeding'—i.e. shut down the corruption probe and save everyone else from jail'" (Encarnación 2017, 87).[9] Rousseff was scapegoated despite the fact that many of her male peers were undeniably guilty of much more serious crimes. Why then, was Rousseff charged with corruption, and why was the campaign to oust her so effective?

The sexism that animated the charges was both instrumental and sincere, deployed by actors who saw Rousseff as unfit because of her gender and understood the mobilizing power of this rhetoric. Leaders within Rousseff's coalition, including Vice President Temer, were never comfortable with a woman as president, and the opposition routinely implied—if not explicitly claimed—Rousseff was a "lesbian," "communist,", "whore," and "subversive" (Encarnación 2017; Sosa 2019). Rousseff was frequently portrayed as corrupting the office of the presidency. During the impeachment process, for example, Senador Magno Malta described Rousseff's presidency as gangrene claiming, "If we amputate the leg, we save the body" (Miroff Miroff).

During the Chamber of Deputies vote, legislators held placards reading 'Tchau Querida', or 'goodbye darling'" (Encarnación 2017, 88). Members of the Chamber justified the vote claiming they

[8]This also coincided with Operation Carwash, a large-scale investigation beginning in 2014 into money laundering and corruption related to Petrobras, the state oil company. Although over 400 have since been indicted, Rousseff was quickly cleared of any wrongdoing doing despite her role as chair of the board of Petrobras from 2003 to 2010.

[9]In another leak, the mayor of Rio de Janiero Eduardo Paes "mocked the president for her dour demeanor" (Garcia-Navarro Garcia-Navarro).

were voting to "'save the county,' 'end communism', and 'restore the foundations of Chirstianity'" (Encarnación 2017, 88). As previously discussed, in this way misogyny served as the connective tissue between the charges, reinforcing their plausibility. Public opposition to Rousseff was similarly gendered and included sexualized fantasies of punishment. One of the more insidious examples was a "sticker(s) showing Rousseff with her legs spread apart around their gas tank openings, sexually violating her image every time they filled up" (Krook and Sanín 2020, 749).

When representatives voted in April, they claimed to impeach Rousseff "in the name of their families and God" (Feres Junior and Sassara 2018, 228). By the end of August ,the process was approved and Rousseff was removed from office. This despite the fact that impeachable offenses in Brazil must both violate the law and produce national instability, criteria that the allegations against Rousseff did not meet. In their analysis, Dos Santos and Jalalzai found that "...Misogyny was an important element during the crisis that culminated in Rousseff's impeachment" (Dos Santos and Jalalazai 2021). When Temer ascended to the presidency, he created an exclusively white and male cabinet (Sosa 2019).

CONCLUSION

In this article, we intervene in the debate regarding the relationship between gender and corruption, by focusing on the process by which women are charged and why these charges tend to stick. We demonstrated that women heads of government are significantly more likely to be charged with corruption than their male counterparts, holding other factors equal. Through case studies of Turkish Prime Minister Tansu Ciller and Brazilian President Dilma Rousseff, we argue that perceptions of women in the public sphere as inherently subversive increases the likelihood corruption charges will be levied against women heads of government.

The case study of Ciller suggests that women heads of government are likely to experience a stronger backlash for behavior that undermines their fellow political elites, especially when that behavior pushes against or undermines that leader's stereotypical feminine behavior. Since women politicians are typically perceived as less corrupt than men, they are likely to incur a more forceful backlash, from both opponents and supporters, for perceived corrupt behavior. Additionally, corruption investigations and charges are a tool that fellow political elites can use to try to remove a woman head of government from

office when they believe she has acted against their political interests. We identified similar patterns in Brazil—the president was likely punished for role incongruity and the charges themselves were initiated by actors who saw the president as acting against their interests. We also find evidence that the logic of the charges against Rousseff were buttressed by narratives of her as a subversive (Encarnación 2017; Sosa 2019). In both cases, the corruption charges were strengthened both by perceptions of role incongruity, and narratives of women's presence in political office as inherently subversive. Future research can further interrogate this finding by developing cases to test this causal mechanism and build theory.

There are significant implications for this research regarding state stability, and the prospects for future women heads of government. First, following evidence presented by Reyes-Housholder (Reyes-Housholder 2020) and Carlin, Carreras, and Love (Carlin et al. 2020) that women leaders' approval ratings are more negatively impacted by corruption charges than their male counterparts, our findings imply that not only are women more likely to be charged, but they are also more likely to face more substantial backlash. This could easily undermine the stability of women's tenure, and executive offices more generally. Secondly, women heads of government are important sources of symbolic power for women in politics. If their tenures are disproportionately associated with corruption, this will inevitably impact the prospects for women running for executive office in the future.

Ultimately, we hope these findings contribute to a small but growing literature on how women heads of government fare in the highest office. This research is critical to our understanding of politics in a world where more women are breaking the highest glass ceiling by becoming heads of government. As research in this area advances – and more women serving in the highest office yields more cases – future research, such as content analysis of media coverage of these women leaders, can further test and refine these explanations.

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